Met Office

February 2016

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

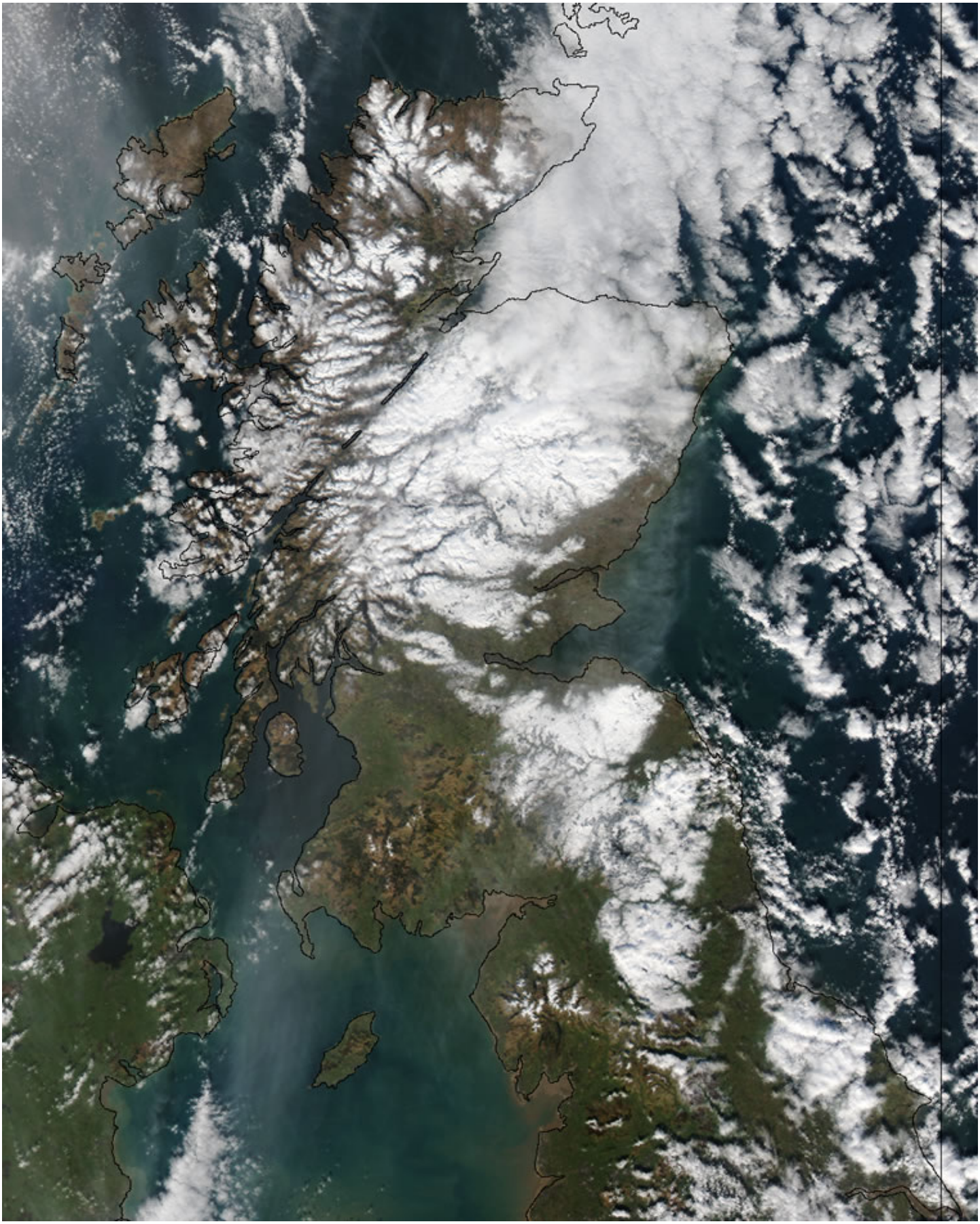
At the start of February, the UK was in an unsettled west to south-westerly regime with frequent rain, especially for western areas. Storm Henry brought widespread gale-force winds on the 1st and 2nd, especially in the north, and then Storm Imogen brought further strong winds mainly to the south on the 7th and 8th. It turned colder around the 15th with some scattered wintry showers and sharp night frosts. After some further rain, there was a mild interlude over England and Wales on the 20th and 21st, but the remainder of the month was generally dry, sunny and cold.

The UK mean temperature was 3.9 °C, which is 0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. It was milder than average in the south, but much of Scotland and Northern Ireland were colder than average. Rainfall was 125% of average, and it was generally wetter than average in the west, but rainfall was close to or below normal in most eastern areas. Sunshine was below average in parts of the south, particularly the south-west and west Wales, but it was sunnier than average elsewhere, and parts of the Midlands and north-east England had more than 150% of average sunshine. The UK as a whole had 122% of average sunshine.

The UK monthly extremes were as follows: A maximum temperature of 16.1 °C was recorded at Denver (Norfolk) on the 21st. A minimum temperature of -14.1 °C was recorded at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) on the 14th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 17th, 125.2 mm of rain fell at Seathwaite (Cumbria). A wind gust of 83 knots (96 mph) was recorded at Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight) on the 7th. A snow depth of 10 cm was measured at Aviemore (Inverness-shire) on the 15th.

This image from the Scottish Avalanche Information Service shows the summit cliffs of Ben Nevis on 27 February 2016 during a rare sunny day, with the North-East buttress directly facing the viewpoint and Tower Ridge on the far right.

This satellite image shows snow cover across Scotland and northern England on 15 February 2016. Copyright Met Office / NASA



Weather impacts

Early February saw a continuation of the unsettled conditions that had typified the winter of 2015/16 so far. There was heavy rain and strong winds from Storm Henry on the 1st and 2nd, and Storm Imogen on the 8th, but the weather became generally quieter as the month progressed.

On the 1st, roads and rail travel were disrupted in parts of Wales, Shropshire, north-east England and Scotland due to fallen or unsafe trees. Lorries were overturned on the Humber Bridge and in various parts of Scotland, and the Forth and Tay Road Bridges were closed to traffic. On the 2nd, there was a landslide on the A9 in Sutherland. On both days, numerous schools were closed across the Highlands and Islands, and structural damage was reported in Glasgow, East Kilbride and Dundee.

On the 7th, heavy rain caused localised flooding across Cornwall, with the A30 closed due to a landslide, flooding and a fallen tree, and flooding affected the fishing village of Portreath. Fallen trees and localised flooding affected road and rail travel across parts of southern England, and the Severn Bridges were closed due to the strong winds. Blaenau Gwent sports centre was evacuated after heavy rain led to the partial collapse of the roof. On the 8th, the QE2 Bridge was closed in addition to the Severn Bridges, and more than 5,000 properties lost power across south Wales, south-west England and the Midlands. Ferry and train services were cancelled or disrupted, and fallen trees, localised flooding and minor property damage were reported quite widely across southern parts of the UK. Two lorries were overturned in south Wales, structural damage was reported in Milford Haven, and parts of Llanelli and Bridgend town centres were closed due to the danger from falling slates.

The weather subsequently became a lot quieter, but ice caught out many drivers following the mild winter, especially in southern parts of the UK. Notable increases in road traffic collisions were reported in south-west England on the 15th and East Anglia on the 16th. Otherwise, there were no further noteworthy weather impacts.

England diary of highlights

February began unsettled and wet with westerly and south-westerly winds. It was generally mild, wet and cloudy during the first half, with some strong winds around the 8th associated with Storm Imogen, but the second half was colder, drier and sunnier, particularly from the 22nd onwards, with some overnight frost.

The mean temperature for February was 0.6 °C above the long-term average. Rainfall was 120% of average, and it was another wet month in Cumbria and north Lancashire with over twice the normal rainfall in west Cumbria, but it was drier than normal in parts of the east. Sunshine was near or below normal in parts of the south, especially the West Country, but it was a sunny month elsewhere with over 150% of normal in parts of the Midlands and north-east. England had 126% of average sunshine overall.

1st to 8th:

The 1st was bright, with scattered showers mainly in the north-west, and mild with Hull reaching 15.1°C. A much cooler day followed on the 2nd with early rain over the south clearing to leave everywhere with sunshine and showers. The 3rd was warmer with sunshine and showers, particularly sunny in the north-east, with 7.3 hours of sunshine at Leeming (North Yorkshire). The 4th was mostly cloudy and very mild after overnight patchy rain, with further patchy rain in the north-west. It stayed mild and cloudy through the 5th with persistent rain spreading east throughout the evening. It was cloudy, windy and wet for all areas on the 6th, and the rain was especially heavy in the south-west with 44.5 mm recorded at Okehampton (Devon), preceding hail showers later in the evening. Sunshine and showers on the 7th turned to widespread heavy rain and gale-force winds later with the approach of Storm Imogen, with a gust of 95 mph at Needles Old Battery

(Isle of Wight). It remained very windy on the 8th, with gusts to 80 mph on the Isles of Scilly, and a band of rain moved north followed by showers.

9th to 15th:

It was colder with early rain on the 9th over the south coast and northern parts clearing away, replaced by showers, these wintry over the hills. The 10th was milder with sunshine and showers, the showers most frequent and heavy over the south-west. There was a frosty start in most places on the 11th, leading to a dry, sunny, cool day with the exception of wintry showers over Northumberland and the West Country. The 12th started frosty in the east, but milder in the west with just a few showers over the north-east and south coasts. The 13th was generally cloudy and cool with wintry showers over the north-east and persistent rain across the south, which turned to snow on high ground in the West Country. The 14th was a cool and mainly dry day with sunny spells, although wintry showers continued over eastern counties and across the Pennines. The wintry showers continued in eastern areas on the 15th, with 8 cm of lying snow at Carlton-in-Cleveland, but it was dry and sunny elsewhere.

16th to 21st:

The 16th started cold with temperatures falling to -7.8 °C at Redesdale Camp (Northumberland), but with some sunshine, before rain accompanied by strong winds spread in from the north-west during the afternoon, with 58.4 mm at St Bees Head (Cumbria). The 17th was mostly cloudy with a band of heavy rain and hill snow slowly moving south-eastwards. The rain cleared the south-east by mid-morning on the 18th leaving a mainly dry day with good sunny spells and only a few scattered showers over the south-west and Lancashire. A sunny but chilly start on the 19th before cloud and rain moved in from the west, the north-west seeing the heaviest falls. On the 20th cloud and rain spread from the north-west with strong winds through the Severn Estuary. It was extremely mild on the 21st with isolated sunny spells as Exeter Airport reached 16.0 °C, but rain in the north-west spread south later while turning more showery.

22nd to 29th:

There was widespread sunshine in the north on the 22nd as patchy rain and drizzle cleared the south coast by late evening leaving lower temperatures. Mainly dry throughout on the 23rd after a frosty start in the north, with long sunny spells. Another cold but sunny day followed on the 24th after a frosty start with -6.3 °C recorded at South Newington (Oxfordshire). It was dry for most on the 25th and remained chilly, with broken cloud and plenty of sunshine after a frosty start. Dry with a frosty start for most on the 26th but rain spread from the south-west from mid morning. The 27th was mainly dry throughout, remaining chilly in the north with sunny spells and occasional wintry showers along the Northumberland coast. After a frosty start, the 28th was mainly dry with sunny spells, only a few isolated showers across north-eastern coasts and the south-east corner. Another frosty and sunny start followed on the 29th before cloud and rain with some hill snow moved in from the west.

Wales diary of highlights

The first half of February was generally mild, wet and cloudy with mainly westerly and south-westerly winds, and some strong winds around the 8th associated with Storm Imogen. It was often colder, drier and sunnier in the second half, particularly the 22nd onwards, with some frosts.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.5 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was another wet month, but less exceptionally so than the previous two months, with 133% of average rainfall overall. Sunshine was above average in the east but below average in the south-west, with 109% of average overall.

1st to 8th:

It was mild and very windy on the 1st, gusts reaching 70 mph in places, with some sunshine, but also showers which were wintry over high ground. The 2nd was much cooler, wet in the south to start, then windy with sunshine and frequent showers, wintry over the hills. It was milder on the 3rd with early patchy rain in the north, but otherwise a mix of sunshine and isolated showers. It was dry for most but cloudy on the 4th after overnight patchy rain and very mild with 15.1°C at Usk (Monmouthshire). It was mild and increasingly windy on the 5th, with prolonged rain in the evening after a dry but cloudy start. There was persistent and heavy rain for all parts on the 6th, finally clearing late evening, with Tredegar (Blaenau Gwent) recording 50.0 mm. Early scattered showers turned to persistent rain for all areas on the 7th with gale-force winds developing along the Bristol Channel. It was stormy on the 8th with Storm Imogen bringing cloudy and wet weather to all parts, and gusts to 83mph at Pembrey Sands (Camarthenshire).

9th to 15th:

It was breezy and cooler on the 9th, with showers for coastal areas. The 10th was milder with sunshine and showers. It was colder again on the 11th with early frost and more in the way of showers, which were wintry on the hills. The 12th was cloudy and cool with a few isolated showers. After a cool, wet start over the southern half of the country on the 13th, it dried up by noon, while it was dry and bright further north. The 14th was mainly dry and bright with isolated showers across the north. The 15th was a cold, dry day with sunny spells.

16th to 20th:

The 16th dawned cold and frosty with sunny spells before cloud and rain accompanied by strong winds spread in from the west during the afternoon. The 17th was mostly cloudy with a band of heavy rain and hill snow slowly moving south-eastwards, clearing in the evening to scattered showers. A mainly dry day with sunny spells followed on the 18th, with only a few scattered showers. A bright and chilly start in the east on the 19th but cloud and patchy rain soon spread across the country, breezy around western and southern coasts. It stayed mild and windy into the 20th with rain in the morning becoming confined to the north later.

21st to 29th:

The 21st was mostly dry and mild with Colwyn Bay (Conwy) recording 15.2 °C but turning colder overnight with showers from the north. The 22nd was a day of sunshine and occasional showers, feeling colder in a northerly breeze. The 23rd was mostly dry with widespread sunshine after a frosty start away from the coast; Valley (Anglesey) recorded 8.2 hrs of sunshine. A mainly dry but cloudy day followed on the 23rd. The 24th was sunny throughout after a cold frosty night, -6.1 °C recorded at Sennybridge (Powys), and isolated showers developed later, mainly over Pembrokeshire. The 25th was dry throughout with broken cloud and some sunshine, and remained chilly. Increasingly cloudy on the 26th, staying dry and cold for most but rain spreading north affected Pembrokeshire from mid-morning. Dry throughout on the 27th with sunny periods but staying chilly. After a frosty start, the 28th was a dry day with bright or sunny spells. There was another frosty start on the 29th with Sennybridge (Powys) recording -6.5 °C before cloud and patchy rain with some hill snow moved in from the west by mid-morning.

Scotland diary of highlights

The first half of February was very unsettled with frequent westerly and south-westerly winds, and it was particularly wet in the south-west. There were strong winds and significant snowfalls across the Scottish mountains. The second half was often colder, drier and sunnier, particularly during the last week of the month, with some night frosts, but little snow at low levels.

The mean temperature for February was 0.5 °C below the long-term average. Rainfall was 126% of average, and it was another wet month in the south-west, but drier than average in Aberdeenshire. Sunshine was 120% of average.

1st to 9th:

It was stormy on the 1st as Storm Henry moved north with frequent rain or showers, wintry even to low levels, and gusts widely over 70mph, reaching 90mph over South Uist (Western Isles) and 84 mm rainfall recorded at Cassley (Sutherland). It was less windy on the 2nd but still cool and unsettled with rain or showers for most parts, falling as snow to low levels during the evening. The 3rd was a day of sunshine and showers with more persistent rain spreading into the west later. A mostly cloudy mild day followed on the 4th with early rain clearing east followed by more patchy rain later in the north-west. Rain throughout on the 5th, especially heavy in the south-west, eventually clearing in the west and leaving showers. The 6th was cloudy and increasingly wet and windy with wintry showers over higher ground later. The 7th was mostly cloudy, unsettled and wet throughout with some brightness in the Northern Isles but rain particularly heavy in the west. It was windy on the 8th and 9th with rain or showers for most, wintry over the hills, but with some sunshine in between, particularly over Grampian and Aberdeenshire.

10th to 15th:

A frosty start in places on the 10th, leading to a cool bright day with wintry showers, heaviest and most frequent over the north-west. The 11th was similar, with most showers this time over the north and east. The 12th started frosty, dry and sunny over the Western Isles and the south-east, cloudy elsewhere with wintry showers over eastern coastal areas. Cool everywhere on the 13th with cloud and snow south of a line Glasgow to Dundee, sunshine and wintry showers elsewhere. The 14th dawned cold and frosty, the coldest night of the winter with -14.1 °C at Braemar (Aberdeenshire). There were more wintry showers along eastern areas but it was drier and brighter further west. Another frosty start on the 15th with scattered wintry showers in the north-east and a 10 cm snow depth at Aviemore (Inverness-shire).

16th to 20th:

The 16th started wet and windy for the Western Isles and this cloud, heavy rain and hill snow gradually moved south-east across the whole country throughout the day. The band of rain cleared the east by mid-morning on the 17th, leaving a day of sunny spells and scattered showers, the showers heaviest and most frequent in the west. The 18th was mainly dry with bright spells across the east but more in the way of scattered showers in the west. A cold and sunny start in the east on the 19th but cloud, rain and hill snow quickly spread in from the west, clearing mid-afternoon but with showers, wintry over hills, following behind. Widespread showers on the 20th, wintry in the north and over higher ground but brighter in the east.

21st to 29th:

Frequent showers dominated the 21st, particularly in the west, falling as snow over higher ground further north with strong winds over the Northern Isles. Sunny spells and scattered wintry showers on the 22nd, and generally colder with winds veering northerly. The 23rd was a mainly dry and bright day, any showers generally confined to the north and 8.8 hrs of sunshine at Prestwick (Ayrshire). Arctic air on the 24th continued the cold feel with showers in the far north and plenty of sunshine elsewhere. It stayed chilly on the 25th and cloudier than of late with wintry showers filtering through north-western glens. The 26th started with a widespread frost but it was a mainly dry and bright day until rain edged in to the west later. Mostly dry throughout on the 27th with plenty of sunshine in the north after a cold night, particularly at Loch Glascarnoch (Highland) with -9.8 °C recorded. After a frosty start, the 28th was a mainly dry day with good sunny spells for most, but with some patchy rain across Orkney and Lewis. After an early frost on the 29th, cloud quickly spread east followed by patchy rain and hill snow with winds strengthening across the west.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

February began changeable, stormy and quite mild with westerly or south-westerly winds dominating. There was frequent rain in the first half, but there were drier, brighter and colder spells in the second half, particularly the 22nd to 28th, with some frosts.

The mean temperature for February was 0.3 °C below the 1981-2010 long-term average. Most of the country had above-average rainfall, with 132% of average overall. Sunshine was 107% of average.

1st to 9th:

Storm Henry on the 1st brought gusts of 75 mph around the coasts, and it was bright and cool with showers, occasionally heavy and wintry. The 2nd was similar, not quite as windy but still with winds gusting to 60 mph in places. The 3rd started showery but the showers were replaced with more persistent rain later, particularly in the north. The 4th was cloudy and mild with patchy rain, mostly in the north-west. There was further prolonged rain on the 5th, heaviest in the south-east, staying relatively mild and cloudy. Remaining cloudy into the 6th with persistent rain spreading east and showers in the west and strengthening winds later. The 7th was wet with rain throughout the day and winds strengthening through the evening as Storm Imogen approached. It was cloudy for most on the 8th and 9th, and windy with rain or showers.

10th to 15th:

The 10th had a frosty start, but became milder with sunshine and a few showers. Similar conditions dominated on the 11th, albeit cloudier and cooler. The 12th was also cloudy and cool with frequent rain or wintry showers. The 13th was similar but with sunny intervals more widespread, and fewer showers. The 14th was a mostly sunny day but still with a few scattered showers. The 15th dawned cold with Katesbridge (County Down) recording -5.2 °C, otherwise it was a mainly dry with sunny spells, clouding over from the west late in the day.

16th to 20th:

The 16th started on a cloudy note with some patchy rain before more heavy rain and hill snow moved across the whole Province in the afternoon and evening with Trassey Slievenaman (County Down) recording 45 mm. The 17th started cloudy with a band of heavy rain and hill snow clearing in the morning to sunny spells and a few scattered showers, mainly in the west. The 18th was a day of sunshine and scattered showers with the majority of the showers across the north and west. There was a cloudy start with patchy rain on the 19th, clearing around lunchtime with showers following, breezy along northern coastal areas. The 20th was cool and cloudy with early frequent showers.

21st to 29th:

The 21st saw early rain in the north but it became more showery later and Murlough (County Down) reached 13.4 °C. After a frosty start, the 22nd had sunshine, but showers too which were wintry over the Sperrin mountains. It was mostly dry on the 23rd with widespread sunshine after an early frost but showers developed along northern coasts later. The 24th was another mostly dry day with widespread sunshine after a cold frosty start when temperatures fell to -6.8 °C at Katesbridge, and a few snow flurries over higher ground. It remained dry and chilly on the 25th but with somewhat more cloud than of late. The 26th started cold and dry but cloud and patchy rain soon spread from the west, clearing east later. The 27th was dry throughout with broken cloud, some sunshine and a chilly feel. After a frosty start, the 28th was mainly dry with plenty of sunny spells, only a few isolated showers across the north coast. The 29th was a cloudy day with rain and hill snow spreading eastwards during the morning, Lough Fea (County Londonderry) measuring 5 cm snow depth, then more heavy rain spread up from the south-west in the afternoon.

Last updated: 21 March 2016

Met Office